

TENNESSEE FOLKLORE SOCIETY  
BULLETIN

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E. G. Rogers, Editor

Tennessee Wesleyan College  
Athens, Tennessee

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## Figurative Language the Folkway

When we consider figurative language the folkway, it becomes apparent that most of our efforts at qualifying our sense impressions are directed to these groups of general experiences regarding which many persons have a common knowledge. An attempt is made here at classifying broadly the nature of the areas to which such figurative reference is made.

### I. Similes:

#### 1. Drinks

as sweet as julep  
as red as wine  
as black as coffee  
as sweet as apple cider  
as wet as water  
as empty as a jug  
as thick as cream  
as rich as skimmed milk  
as sour as buttermilk

#### 2. Food

as flat as a pancake  
as flat as a fritter (flitter)  
as cold as Kraut  
as sweet as sugar  
as thick as mush  
as thick as molasses  
as thin as gravy  
as easy as pie  
as hot as pepper  
as hot as ginger  
as sour as vinegar  
as thin as pea soup  
as red as a beet

#### 3. Fruit and Vegetable

as slick as a peeled onion  
as bitter as a persimmon  
as plentiful as blackberries  
as red as a cherry  
as green as a pumpkin (pumpkin vine)

as crisp as lettuce  
as green as a gourd  
as cool as a cucumber  
as mad as hops  
as thick as hops  
as pretty as a peach  
as brown as a nut

#### 4. Animals

as naked as a turkey buzzard  
as fat as a pig  
as stubborn as a mule  
as crooked as a snake  
as sick as a dog  
as slow as an ox  
as slow as a snail  
as mad as a settin' hen  
as mad as a wet hen  
as ill as a hornet  
as wobbly as a duck  
as blind as a bat  
as mean as a billy goat  
as crazy as a loon  
as lousy as a dog  
as slick as owl grease  
as tough as whitethorn  
as poor as a snake  
as crazy as a bedbug  
like a leech  
as busy as a bee  
as mad as a hornet  
like water running off a duck's back  
like pouring water on a duck's back  
as strong as an ox  
as busy as a bee  
swims like a fish  
sings like a lark  
slow as molasses in January  
happy as a coon on a log  
lipping full ( as full as a pitcher filled  
to the lip )  
as dead as a mackerel  
as dumb as a fish  
as fleet as a deer  
as cagy as a cat  
like a bat out of hell  
as wise as an owl  
as slick as an eel  
as quick as a cat  
as big as a whale  
as dry as a bone  
as full as a tick  
as cross as a bear  
as poor as a lizard

as poor as a church mouse  
as proud as a peacock

5. Household Articles

as full of holes as a sifter  
as light as a cork  
as flat as a rug  
as keen as a razor  
as dull as a pair of scissors  
as thin as paper  
as straight as a nail  
as crooked as a rusty nail  
as sharp as a tack  
as neat as a pin  
as sticky as fly paper  
as clear as crystal  
as clear as a bell  
as stiff as a poker  
as white as a sheet  
as clean as a pin

6. Garments

as flat as a cocked hat  
as purty (pretty) as a petticoat  
like a pair of gloves  
as soft as silk  
(fits) like a shirt

7. Sound Instruments and Music

as soft as music  
as coarse as a foghorn  
as shrill as a trumpet

8. Tools and Implements

as dull as a froe  
as slender as a rake  
as sharp as an ax  
as straight as an arrow  
as crazy as a cross-cut saw

9. Elemental Things

as quick as lightning  
as deep as the ocean  
as blue as the sky  
as white as snow  
as cold as ice  
as hot as fire



as cold as sleet  
as gentle as a zephyr breeze  
as slow as Christmas  
as fresh as Spring  
as shaky as a leaf  
as bright as a spark  
as black as night  
as bright as day  
as slender as a telegraph pole  
as fast as greased lightning  
as dark as pitch (pitch-dark)  
hotter than hell  
colder than hell  
as dead as four o'clock  
as dead as winter  
as dead as a door nail

10. People

as scared as a Nigger (Negro) in a woodpile  
as gentle as a maid  
sleep like a baby  
as slick as a politician  
as slick as a lawyer  
(know you) like a palm of my hand  
as mean as a miser

11. Miscellaneous

as black as soot  
as black as tar  
as a needle in a haystack  
as slick as a greased pole  
as naked as a briar patch  
as easy as falling off a log  
as high as a kite  
as thick as mud  
as clean as mud  
as crooked as a rail fence  
as bitter as gall  
as straight as a picket fence  
puff like a steam engine  
as thin as a scil  
as green as grass  
(read you) like a book  
as crooked as a stick  
as light as a feather  
as firm as a rock  
as ugly as sin  
as poor as a rail  
as bright as a silver dollar  
as bright as a new dollar

II. Metaphors:

The following implied references are made to people:

simlin head  
beetle brain  
saucer head  
brain sterm  
worm  
goose  
nosegay  
tornado  
chatterbox  
mouth organ  
pumpkin head  
old buzzard  
old bat  
brute

III. Synecdoche:

blue moon  
a month of Sundays  
a coon's age

IV. Hyperbole:

won't cut hot butter

And now the reader will make his own additions to this list.

E. G. Rogers

Tennessee Wesleyan College

### FOLK HUMOR IN SUT LOVINGOOD'S YARNS\*

Sut Lovingood's Yarns, although among the most popular products of frontier humor in the 1850's and 1860's, received slight and discouraging recognition for many decades after their publication. Published in 1867, at the time when the "genteel" tradition was gaining its firmest hold on American letters, these rough, unhibited sketches of East Tennessee mountain life were for two generations dismissed by the literati as tasteless, vulgar stories of no literary merit.

In the last twenty years, however, these tales written by George W. Harris, the versatile Knoxville journalist, steamboat captain, silversmith, engineer, and lawyer, have been rediscovered and recognized as a high point in native American humor. Today Harris probably ranks as Tennessee's foremost humorist and one of the state's three or four outstanding writers of the nineteenth century.

There is undoubtedly much crude humor in Sut Lovingood -- occasional profanity, indelicate treatment of sex, and above all, too heavy dependence on the infliction of physical pain as a staple of humor. Sut likewise takes an unholy delight in describing vomiting, unpleasant odors, and nakedness, all popular ingredients of Southwestern humor (witness Mark Twain's life-long fondness for them), but hardly palatable to the modern reader. There is, however, never any perverted morality in Sut's stories, and the author of the article on Harris in The Library of Southern Literature made an overstatement when he failed to give Sut credit for one single virtue.<sup>1</sup> He is, for instance, not without the finer feelings towards

\* This paper was read at the annual meeting of the Tennessee Folklore Society in Cockeville on November 4, 1950.

1. J. Thompson Brown, Jr., "George W. Harris", Library of Southern Literature. New Orleans: The Martin & Hoyt Company, 1908-13, p.2099.

the ladies, both old and young. Sut is also essentially honest according to the mountain code, and like most genuine literary rogues, hardly ever perpetrates his mischief on any really worthy people, negroes excepted.

The treatment of sex in Harris' narratives is more in the earthy vein of Chaucer, Shakespeare, and Rabelais than the twentieth century manner. The story "Rare Ripe Garden Seed", in which the dull-witted husband is almost made to believe that the remarkable garden seed will reduce by half the pre-natal period, is particularly reminiscent of the older European tales, and folk music devotees will doubtless recognize therein echoes of a familiar theme.

The changed attitude towards Sut Lovingood's Yarns in the last twenty years perhaps stems from Franklin J. Meine's Tall Tales of the Southwest, published in 1930. The author of this epoch-making book declared that "Sut Lovingood is a unique and original character in American literature . . . . For vivid imagination, comic plot, Rabelaisian touch, and sheer fun, the Sut Lovingood Yarns surpass anything else in American humor!"<sup>2</sup> His opinion has since been reinforced by a number of scholarly works, notably Walter Blair's Native American Humor and the late Professor Mathieson's American Renaissance. Several of the yarns appeared for the first time in a college literature textbook in the recent Literature of the United States, edited by Blair, Hornberger, and Stewart.

Professor Blair ascribes the worth of Harris' stories largely to the fact that "he had greater genius than his contemporaries for

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2. Franklin J. Meine, Tall Tales of the Southwest. New York: A.A. Knopf, 1930, pp. xxiii-xxiv.

transferring the unique artistry of the oral narrative to the printed page."<sup>3</sup> Sut Lovingood is indeed a minor classic of folk humor in print. The rest of this paper will be concerned with an analysis of folk elements of this humor: (1) sketches of folk customs (2) tall talk (3) rambling narration (4) comic sayings, reflecting mountaineer attitudes. All are close to the life of the East Tennessee folk about whom Harris wrote nearly a century ago.

Most of the folk customs which Harris depicts are still existent in the highland regions of the South. The quilting party, for instance, is the subject of one of Sut's best known yarns, "Mrs. Yardley's Quilting."

The title quilting is completely inadequate to describe such a catch-all social event in the mountains. Mrs. Yardley herself realized this fact in her announcements. "She had narrated hit thru the neighborhood that nex Saterdag she'd gin a quiltin..... 'Gblers, fiddils, gals, an' whisky' were the words she sent to the men-folk.... She sed tu the gals, 'Sweet toddy, huggin, dancin, an' huggers in 'bundance.'"<sup>4</sup> Needless to say, Sut breaks up this meeting, as he does virtually all others, by goading a horse to run wild in the yard in which all the quilts are hanging.

The social fight is another common incident in Sut's career. Harris had first gained fame with his story "Dick Harlan's Dance", featuring a free-for-all mountain rumpus, and he repeated this scene in "Bart Davis' Dance", in which the familiar hypocritical, hard-shell preacher makes the mistake of calling his host "hoss-p"

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3. Walter Blair, Native American Humor. New York: American Book Company, 1937, p. 101.

4. George W. Harris, Sut Lovingood's Yarns. New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1867, p. 111. (Unless otherwise indicated, all other quoted material is from this source.)



able." Sut persuades old Bart that this is a mortal insult, and a general melee results, climaxed by the hair-snatching antics of a fiery, black-eyed mountain girl. Sut, as usual, comes through this escapade with a minimum of injury to his person.

One of the most popular subjects of the oral tall tales was hunting, calling forth the greatest talents for straight-faced lying on the part of the narrator. Sut Lovingood spins only one hunting story, which is tailored more to his peculiar talents as a hell-raiser than to the conventional pattern. In "The Snake-Bit Irishman" Sut is engaged by a judge and his hunting companions to get rid of an unwelcome Irish guest who has intruded upon their party. No task could be more to Sut's liking, as he proceeds to stick the "tater-eater", as he calls him, with a black thorn and his Mexican spurs simultaneously, crying out, "Snake! snake! big snake!" The Irishman's reaction is described in the drawling understatement typical of Southwestern humor: "Now hit's not onreasonibil to tell that this hurtin an' noise woke Paddy purty eshenshully all over, an' all et onst tu."

Perhaps no other type of gathering brings out Sut's original talents so much as the revival or camp-meeting. The scene in which he breaks up a negro night-meeting by unloosing deadly odors and ball hornets is perhaps the most offensive to the reader of today, since the negroes in it, almost alone among his victims, are innocent and helpless. But when Sut puts the lizard down old Parson John Bullen's back at the precise time that the old reprobate is threatening his cowed auditors with the serpents of hell, an uproariously funny incident develops. It is enhanced by the parson's fervent conviction that he is himself "rastilin wif the great inimy

rite now" and his unabashed stripping before his shocked feminine listeners.

This lizard story is, of course, a familiar American folk tale with which Harris was doubtless acquainted. Sandburg relates that Abe Lincoln in his youth was something of a social lion because of his inimitable recounting of a story about the lizard and the parson which colselv resembles Harris' yarn.<sup>5</sup>

Other scenes which depict folk customs are those occurring in taverns and doggeries, a wedding, a Mason meeting, and a Negro funeral which Sut effectively frustrates by switching a live "corps" for a real one in the coffin, thereby attaining his loftiest stature as a terrorist. As Sut says of the dead negro whom he has set up in the corner, horribly painted and adorned by snakes: "Now, rite thar, boys, in that corner, stood the dolefulest skeer makin mer-sheen mortal man ever seed outen a ghost camp." The resulting complications are rather comical, but the story becomes a bit tedious towards the end. This yarn also does not have as much true folk atmosphere as most of the others, yielding as it does to the conventions of "darkie" humor prevalent in Harris' day.

Tall talk is perhaps the best known ingredient of native American humor. In Sut Lovingood it takes the form principally of preposterous exaggeration in the recounting of events. Sut himself rarely boasts of his physical prowess in the familiar vein of the "ring-tailed roarer" and the "half-alligator, half-horse." He likewise never indulges in the description of supernatural phenomena--snowfalls, rains, gigantic animals and the like, as did Davy Crockett.

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5. Carl Sandburg, Abraham Lincoln: The Prairie Years. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1926, Vol. 1, pp. 135-36.

and his prototypes.

There is one Sut Lovingood story, however, in which a bona fide, phapsodic braggard holds the center of the stage in the familiar South-western manner. Wirt Staples is the genuine article- a "ring-tailed roarer" who can make good his boasts. As Sut says of him, "When the State-fair offers a premium for men like it now does fur jackasses, I means tu enter Wirt Staples." This formidable giant stations himself in a doggery, holding a small negro boy in one hand and a vension ham in the other, rhapsodizing:

....I'se jus' a mossel ove the bes' man what ever laid a shadder ontu this dirt. Hit wilts grass, my breff pizens skeeters, an' my tromp gits yeathquakes. I kin bust the bottom outen a still by blowin in at the wum, I kin addil a room full ove goose aigs by peepin in at the key hole, an' I kin spit a blister ontu a washpot, ontill the flies blow hit.

Wirt's blending of drinking, tall talk and menacing actions is in strict accordance with the conventions of Southwestern humor.

While not himself a braggard in the conventional sense, Sut is definitely proud of what he considers to be his chief gifts. In his mock sermon directed mainly against tavern proprietors, Sut enumerates the "five great facks" about himself:

Fustly, that I hain't got nara a soul, nuffin but a whisky proof gizzard, sorta like the wust half ove a ole par ove saddil bags. Seconly, that I'se too durn'd a fool tu cum even onder millertary lor. Thudly, that I hes the longes' par ove laigs ever hung to ony cackus, szeptin only ove a grandaddy spider, an' kin beat him a usen ove em jis'es bad es a skeer'd dorg kin beat a crippled mud turkil. Foufly, that I kin chamber more corkscrew, kill-devil whisky, an' stay on aind, than any-thing 'szeptin only a broad bottum'd chun. Fivety, an' las'ly kin git intu more durn'd misfortnit skeery scrapes, than any-body, an' then run outen them faster, by golly, nor anybody.

Otherwise Sut is relatively modest about his abilities and talents, and only occasionally borders on fantasy in his story-telling. On at least one occasion, however, he sorely tries the

credulity of his listeners or readers. In describing the aftermath of a fight in which he had routed his opponent by placing burning matches in his adversary's coat pocket, Sut describes what follows in this fashion:

He had two pounds ove gunpowder in tother pocket.... Just as he got tu the carryall, the powder cotch fire' an' soon arterwards went off, an' so did he, head fust, frog fashion, rite thru the top load ove tin war. He lit a runnin ten foot tuther side.... the tale ove hie shut wus loose, an, up in the air thirty feet, still a-risin an' blazin like a komit.... It rained tin buckets, an' strainers, an' tin cups, an' pepper boxes, an' pans, an' stage ho'ns, all over that street fur two minits an' a 'alf.

There is perhaps nothing so exaggerated in Sut's yarns as the capacity of the human body to stand the worst kind of torments and accidents. By playing down the disastrous effects of his pranks, which might have literally netted him score of murders, Sut makes the humor less cruel. All of his stories, perhaps all of his talk, are to be taken with a big grain of salt, so long as the members of his audience do not actually challenge him on any points. In such cases, he is always ready with some such withering retort as, "You mus'be a dam fool."

A third element of folk humor which is exemplified in Sut Lovin'good's Yarns is rambling narration. This technique has become so well-known since Mark Twain employed it in The Celebrated Jumping Frog that it hardly needs to be treated here. Like all true yarn-spinners, Sut begins his stories in very leisurely fashion, branching off into irrelevant discussions of characters of some idea of his, and frequently leaves his main incident for a more interesting sidelight in the middle.

Thus in the sketch "Sut Lovingood's Dog" we lose track of the dog story as Sut becomes involved in a fight with the stranger, Rea-



Back Davy. In the last of the stories, "Dad's Dog School," the tale purports to be an account of old Lovingood's attempt to train a dog by donning cowhide to play the role of a cow. For several pages, however, this story is lost sight of as Sut becomes involved with Squire Hanley, whom he treats to a merry ride by placing a burr under the tail of that old gentleman's horse. Such rambling is characteristic of the whole volume of Sut's adventures.

Folk humor has always been replete with wise saws, or merely comic sayings, which illustrate the native character. Sut Lovingood is no tower of wisdom, but he is at least quite free in his expression of opinions, reflecting for the most part mountain attitudes, and he is by no means devoid of shrewd common sense. Much of the best that is contained in these yarns appears in this guise. Let us consider some of his likes and dislikes in people, for example.

Sut has no love in his soul for any representatives of the law or of the clergy, it would appear. He likewise has no use for Yankees, tavern proprietors, or ugly women.

In describing Parson John Bullen, whom he dislikes more thoroughly than anybody else in those parts, Sut calls him "the durnd infunel, hiperkritikal, pot-bellied, scaly-hided, whisky-wastin, stinkin ole groun' hog." Undoubtedly the worst of all these traits in his scale of values are "hiperkritikal" and "whisky wastin."

Sut remarks at one time that everybody was invited to Mrs. Vardley's quilting except "the constabil an' suckit rider, two dam easily-spared pussons." As for a Yankee pedlar, Sut avers that his soul "Wud hev more room in a turnip-seed tu fly round in than a leather-wing bat has in a meetin house; that's jis' so." Finally, in naming his own Rogue's Gallery, the mountain lad groups together



"murd'rs, 'dult'rs, hook-nose Jews, suckit-riders, and tavrins folk."

He is extravagant in his praise for widows, who "hes all been tu Jamaky an' larnt how sugar's made, an' knows how to sweeten wif hit." As to the proper sphere of activities for men and women, Sut's view is in the familiar mountaineer vein:

Men were made a-purpus jis' tu eat, drink, an' fur stayin awake in the yearly part ova the nights: an' wimen wer made tu cook the vittils, mix the sperits, an' help the men du the stayin awake. That's all, an' nuthin' more, onless hits fur the wimin tu raise the devil atwix meals, an' kint socks, atwix drams, an' the men tu play short kerds, swap hosses wif fools, an' fite fur exercise at odd spells.

His simple, manly tastes are again reflected in his condemnation of the taverns in favor of "the plain one-bottil doggery fur my drinkin, the kitchen fur my villils, an' the barns fur my bed, whar the bugs cease tu bite, an' the tired kin rest."

Towards book learning Sut has nothing but scorn. In the preface to the collected yarns he remarks dourly, "I is now a durnder fool then I wer in them days, fur I now considers myself a orthur." He is apparently illiterate, but always has his wits about him, and is by no means the fool he makes himself out to be. Because of the quickness of his wits and his speed of foot in escaping from the scenes of his pranks, Sut always manages to come out unscathed and unfettered by the shackles of the law.

There are several other elements of folk humor in Harris' sketches about the hell-raising mountaineer that might be developed. For example, his dialect and imagery, or his use of superstition, might well be topics for separate studies of this length. Certainly it would be hard to discover another American humorist who was a greater master of the use of homely, concrete, comical images than was Harris. Lack of time and space, however, precludes, further

discussion of these other ingredients.

In conclusion, then the gist of this paper may be briefly summarized. Sut Lovingood's Yarns, which were regarded as vulgar and inconsequential tales until recent years, are now regarded as a landmark of native American humor. In the humorous depiction of local customs, in the use of tall talk and rambling narration, and in expressing typical mountaineer attitudes, George W. Harris brought typical folk humor to the printed page with a rollicking verve and authenticity which should firmly establish Sut Lovingood's Yarns as a minor American classic.

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James Penrod

George Peabody College

ANNUAL MEETING, TENNESSEE FOLKLORE SOCIETY  
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 4, 1950  
LIBRARY BUILDING, TENNESSEE POLYTECHNIC INSTITUTE  
COOKEVILLE, TENNESSEE

Morning Session.... 10:00-12:30

DEVOTIONAL - The devotional was offered by Dean Charles N. Sharpe of Tennessee Polytechnic Institute.

PRESIDENTIAL REPORT - Professor Charles F. Bryan of the Department of Music, Peabody College, Nashville, Tennessee, deferred his report to the final business session in the afternoon at which time he indicated that the TFS has been assured quarters in the New Tennessee State Archives Building upon its completion.

THE PARTIAL UNMAKING OF AN IGNORAMUS - Dr. George Grise, Austin Peay State College, Clarksville, Tennessee, prefaced the evolution of his title with a rather spicily pungent explanation of the relationships between an immature musician and the consistent unobjectiveness which retarded the compulsion of an environment conducive to his everpresent love for music. He explained the origin and use of the Auto-Harp and accompanied his singing of a number of the folk songs.

FOLK HUMOR IN SUT LOVINGOOD'S YARNS - This paper was brought by James Penrod of George Peabody College for Teachers, Nashville, Tennessee. "Sut Lovingood" is the pseudonym of George W. Harris of Knoxville, Tennessee, whose verbal dialogue commends itself equally well to print. Exaggeration, unsuspected episodes, and challenging realism mark his style. These deal with folk customs, tall talk, and wize saws. (The paper is found elsewhere in this issue of the Bulletin.

OLK SONGS - Mr. Bob Rickard of Whipple, West Virginia, interpreted a number of the old folk songs most beautifully to guitar accompaniment. He gave his own Virginia version of "Barbara Allen." The many fine interpretative qualities of the singer's voice were obvious.

PIPES AND PIPE SMOKERS - Mr. Bill Frey of Cookeville, Tennessee, selected for demonstration and display several of the more interesting of his collection of some 650 pipes collected from all parts of the world, and gave the audience many pointers regarding the history and background of this universal pastime.

THE LORE OF CHILDREN IN RHYME - Dr. Herbert Halpert, Professor of Language and Literature, Murray State College, Murray, Kentucky, outlined various categories and classifications of children's lore in rhyme, and then gave indigenous examples of how this lore effects its survival and usefulness. Dr. Halpert is preparing a book for publication on this subject.

PRESENTATION OF RECENT BOOKS - Professor C. P. Snelgrove, Librarian, Tennessee Polytechnic Institute, Cookeville, Tennessee, offered an extensive display of current folk books, pointing out specific types of materials as to their availability and usefulness. University Presses of the South are publishing attractive and valuable collections of folksongs and books on the Arts and Crafts.

SPECIAL LUNCHEON - Luncheon was delightfully and abundantly provided by the Tennessee Tech Cafeteria. Committee meetings were held during the hour.

Afternoon Session - 1:45-4:00

CONCERT - The group reassembled to hear a brief program of folksongs interpreted from Bryan and Jackson's collection of "Folksongs for the Public Schools" by the Tennessee Tech Ensemble and directed by Mr. Edward Williams of that institution.

CARVING LORE - Mr. L. M. Bullington of Cookeville, Tennessee, described the skills and philosophy attending his favorite pastime of wood-carving. He presented a most interesting display of his workmanship.

FOX HUNTING LORE - Mr. Mason England Hougland of Nashville, Tennessee, presented fox-hunting as a religion which differentiates itself into various sects each with its own peculiar style and purpose. Mr. Hougland has published a book on fox-hunting titled Going Away published by the Blue Ridge Press, Berryville, Virginia.

UNUSUAL FINDS IN TENNESSEE FOLK SONG HUNTING - Professor George Boswell of Austin Peay State College, Clarksville, Tennessee, made a brief report on the general collection of folk songs he has made in Tennessee during the past two years. These are now in form for filing in the Folklore Division of the State Archives as soon as that space is made available. Mr. Boswell sang brief portions of representative selections. Thirty dollars was voted to provide him further with recording tape for this work.

BUSINESS SESSION - Reports were heard from the Secretary, E. G. Rogers; the treasurer, T. J. Farr; the committee to consider the 1951 meeting place, Dr. Susan Riley, Chairman, C. P. Snelgrove, and E. G. Rogers. This committee named Austin Peay State College, Clarksville, as the next meeting place. Dr. Pullen Jackson reported the following slate of officers for 1951 which was duly elected Miss Frieda Johnson, George Peabody College, Nashville, president; George C. Boswell, Austin Peay State College, Clarksville, vice president; T. J. Farr, Tennessee Polytechnic Institute, Cookeville, treasurer; E. G. Rogers, Tennessee Wesleyan College, Athens, secretary and editor of the Bulletin.



## BOOK REVIEWS

Russell Lord and Kate Lord, Forever the Land, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1950, \$5.00.

Forever the Land, as the sub-title implies is "a country chronicle and anthology." Russell Lord as one of the founders of Friends of the Land has for many years been interested in this organization with its journal The Land. This anthology, therefore, records the interests, labors, and achievements of many of those people who have manifested a deep concern about the care of the earth, the use of soil and rain, and the worth of these to man in their manifold relationships. The volume is effectively and attractively illustrated by Kate Lord in a manner which has already made her work well-known. The materials often have a significant literary value in addition to their integrated feeling for the soil.

Among its contributors are well-known authors such as Louis Bromfield, Stuart Chase, E. B. White, John Don Passos, David Cushman Doyle, Hugh Bennett, and Chester Davis. Our young Tennessean, George Scarbrough, contributes "Morning at Etowah." Selections consist of drama, story, anecdote, essay, and poetry. Moods, philosophies, patterns of cultured wisdom from the various regions of the land are found here. As Faye Adams (Texas) says in "The Strength of the Land Calls,"

The voices of life,  
Joyous, restive, and bereaved are speaking:  
Wisdom and strength and peace!

E.G.R.

James Benson Sellers, Slavery in Alabama, University of Alabama Press, University Alabama, 1950, \$4.00.

This is not only a comprehensive volume on slavery in Alabama, but is a representative study of what happened as an integral part of the system in a comparable way in other states of the South before the War Between the States. Since slavery was introduced and established in Alabama primarily across the borderlines of other states, slavery as a system is dealt with here primarily from the standpoint of its social, economic, political, and religious bearings within the state -- problems largely attendant upon factors indigent to this state. These factors, however, were not greatly different from those found elsewhere.

Although slavery was deep-rooted in a system of the South's economy, the reader is soon led to discover that promoters of the system generally had the welfare of the slaves at heart and did much to promote their racial heritage although it seemed at times that local laws lent to the contrary effects. An adequacy of food, clothing, shelter, and medical care were naturally conducive to a sound labor-economy, but many slaves received instructions in reading and writing and in religious matters long before laws restraining these were removed. In Alabama both the Catholic Church and the Protestant faiths such as the Methodists, Baptists, and Presbyterians did much to promote a more wholesome life for the slaves long before religion was used as a sustaining argument by both sides.



for propagandic purposes.

Much enlightenment is offered as to the relationships between masters and slave, and overseer and slave, the requirements and restrictions regulating slave labor, the slave and free status of the negro, the problems of discipline, punishment, and the legal status of slaves, the value, sale, and uses of slaves, the problem of the free negro elsewhere and at home, and the final effort to sustain slavery in the face of interference from the outside-- these are some of the points which make this book one of most delightful reading for both student and layman interested in this phase of our folkways.

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E. G. R.

Thomas B. Alexander, Political Reconstruction in Tennessee, Vanderbilt University Press, Nashville, 1950, \$4.00.

Tradition has a way of prejudicing truth-- even historical truth sometimes-- until the facts are again produced by thorough research and presented impartially. This has been done in Political Reconstruction in Tennessee in a way which castigates much of the atrocious thinking often attributed to Tennessee but really belonging elsewhere. Certainly there were Radicals both North and South, but some credence must be given to general conditions excessively bad already because of the long years of war and of economic and political depravity abuses of "scalawag" or "carpetbagger" government. Conservatives were quite as ready as the Radicals to abuse the disfranchisements of the negro. Both political groups and even the die-hard Whigs were equally willing in turn to clear the atmosphere forever of the fated and fateful opposition.

Fortunately for the state at large, political leaders fell out within their own camps as in the case of Governor William G. Brownlow and Andrew Johnson. So often did political bickerings in East Tennessee break camp that even this section of the state was definitely instrumental in filling Conservative ranks in 1869 in the election of Dewitt Clinton Senter as governor. In spite of the South's almost complete impoverishment, its wild legislative railroad schemes, and its failure from the standpoint of finding any sort of satisfactory solution to the problem of the free Negro, at least much of the white vote in Tennessee was again finding expression and the state was rallying barely in time to escape a worse sort of punishment from the outside -- the Federal Government.

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E. G. R.

Byron Arnold, Folksongs of Alabama, University of Alabama Press, University, Alabama, 1959, \$4.50.

Folksongs of Alabama by Byron Arnold is the first representative and authoritative collection of folksongs exclusively of that state. However, many folksongs indigent to Alabama are found elsewhere, and many of the well-known ballads found in most of the other states do as well, have their own special versions in Alabama. The author sought out the songs through tireless effort returning many times to a number of these most valuable sources of cabin and plantation homes, the ridge lands, the cotton belt, the swamplands, the city and the country, Negro churches, and railroad gangs, and everywhere that people sang themselves into their work and out of their sorrows.

The volume is supplied with brief biographies and explanations and interpretations of the songs by those who sang the ballads for recording. When the author became interested in the folksong of Alabama in 1938, he began an intense study of this material in 1948. Somewhat like the survey of John A. Lomax in the South, Mr. Arnold then becomes interested in the singer herself and uses the technique of recording the songs according to the one who sings them. There is no effort at recording and comparing variants. The author says, "Alabama should be proud of this musical heritage of folksongs, and proud also that this heritage is still used by the singers as a basic means of expression in everyday life." Foot references are made to printings of editions of English versions of the ballads so that a basic check may be made against original background. The singer identifies her own sources where known giving the volume usability, completeness, and versatility of interest.

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E. G. R.

Alfred Leland Crabb, Reunion at Chattanooga, The Bobbs-Merrill Company, Inc., Indianapolis, 1950, \$2.75.

The contribution of Alfred Leland Crabb to the literature of the South portraying the ante-bellum days and reconstruction period of Nashville and Chattanooga is well recognized. His series of novels dealing with this period of history include such titles as Dinner at Belmont, Supper at the Maxwell House, Lodging at St. Cloud, Breakfast at the Hermitage, and Home to the Hermitage; A Mockingbird Sang at Chicamauga is now followed by the Chattanooga Reconstruction volume of Reunion at Chattanooga.

Chattanooga was no exception, it was a rather striking example. In fact, of the many inducements compelling those who had fallen in love with the beauty and romance of the South to return after the war to remake their fortunes and often to help rebuild the fortunes of others. These people were as a rule progressive although there were occasional opportunists whose purposes savored of definite social and economic misgivings. While these brought youth and spirit, purpose and culture, incidentally there came along with them also an epidemic of yellow fever. Working themselves through

these special handicaps, these newcomers together with native Chatahoogans, reestablished their homes and their hearts in the loveliness of their surroundings - the mountain and hills. North and South again met in love and laughter which extended from Lookout Mountain to Missionary Ridge and into remote distances beyond.

Grandma Blevins would not easily let go the ties and traditions which bound her to the past, but she impressed others with her industry and neighborliness. She takes over the brickyard when her son Clay is stricken with yellow fever. Grandma forgets any animosities which may have existed when her granddaughter fell deeply in love with a young yankee whom she married. Then Mrs. Blevins insisted that her yankee neighbors build their homes of Blevins brick. North and South were learning to live together.

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- E. G. R.

Mason Houghland, Gone Away, Blue Ridge Press, Berryville, Virginia, 1949.

One cannot read very far in Mason Houghland's Gone Away, a book on fox hunting, without soon realizing that the author is both natural lover and philosopher in addition to his superlative qualifications as a follower of the chase. Here is a sport described as being "more nearly a passion than a game...On horseback, on muleback, or more often afoot, every night of the year, somewhere in every state in the Union, the horns of this great army of 'hill-toppers' awaken the echoes of field and forest."

"Foxhunters share with farmers and with fishermen," says the author "a distinction and noble phase of life in that their gain is no man's loss." As an active foxhunter or as a pronounced observer, the reader is carried through this attractively illustrated volume at an interested clip sitting about campfires spinning quaint and homely philosophy while listening to the familiar yelp of some distant chase of dogs hot on the trail. The breeding, the feeding, and the training of dogs is made interesting, while the habits and cunning of the fox is something most marvellous indeed. The handling of the pack, the speed of the chase, the "schooling" of young hounds, the qualities to be developed in the young dog, his feeding and care, the tests for quality in a good hunting hound, the kinds and characteristics of foxes and what to expect of them in the chase, the rider and the horse, and even the reaction of the landowner to hunting over his premises - these are a few of the many considerations treated in this book.

The volume is spiced throughout with humor and witticism, as when Bill Nye says, "A poor man may own one hound, and some may be poor enough to own five." On one occasion pursued and pursuing ran right through a Sunday morning service and broke up the meeting. The volume is printed in a brown-tinted type on eggshell paper and is vellum bound.

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- E. G. R.

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